

## FAQ on Indiana Title I Preschools



### ***Funding***

#### **Do preschool students count towards enrollment numbers for Title I school eligibility purposes?**

No. For building eligibility purposes, enrollment counts only include students ages five to seventeen.

#### **How may preschool programs be funded under Title I?**

There are several ways in which preschool programs may be funded under Title I. For example—

- A participating school may use its Title I funds to operate a preschool program.
- An LEA may reserve an amount from the LEA's total allocation to operate a Title I preschool program for eligible children in the district as a whole or for a portion of the district.

#### **How may district-operated Title I preschool programs be funded?**

An LEA may reserve an amount from the LEA's total allocation and distribute those funds to specific Title I schools or other comparable public early childhood education programs to operate Title I preschool programs. Head Start, Even Start, and Early Reading First are examples of such programs.

#### **How may Title I preschool programs use funds?**

An LEA may use funds to provide direct services, such as staff salaries or fringes, equipment, supplies, and so on. An LEA may also use funds to extend services. For example, an LEA may use Title I funds to extend existing preschool services in order to provide more intensity and sustained programs. Some options include:

- Purchasing "slots" by paying a per-pupil cost in a high-quality program;
- Extending hours in the instructional day;
- Extending days in a school-week; and
- Providing summer school programming.

#### **How can an LEA fund a Title I preschool program with limited funds?**

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Early childhood is actually considered a very cost-effective use of money because early investment in interventions helps reduce or prevent later costs related to remediation, special education services, and so on. While most district coordinators recognize the benefits of proactive interventions in early childhood programming, they are hesitant to reallocate funds away from students who are currently receiving support. However, in the current fiscal climate, most districts are unable to fund additional programming for early childhood students. Such districts may consider:

- Expanding existing early childhood programs (e.g. four-year-old kindergarten, Head Start, and so on) by lengthening the day or the week for Title I students.
- Purchasing “seats” in existing programs (e.g. private daycare and preschool programs, Head Start, and so on) for Title I students;
- Reserving Title I funds to develop one, district-wide targeted program serving the most at-risk students from across the district; or
- Consolidating funds within a schoolwide program. Schoolwide programs only need to address the intents and purposes of the combined programs and ensure the needs of the intended beneficiaries of the combined programs are met. For example, in a schoolwide program, a Title II, Part A dollar need not be tracked to an allowable Title II professional development activity as long as the school can demonstrate that the intents and purposes of Title II were addressed generally in the program.

There are some exceptions, however. Schoolwide programs are still required to meet all programmatic requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In addition, programs must still meet program-linked requirements relating to health, safety, civil rights, student and parental participation and involvement, services to private school children, maintenance of effort, uses of federal funds to supplement, not supplant non-federal funds, and the distribution of funds to state and local educational agencies. Finally, the authority to combine federal funds only applies to programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education.”

### **How should a Title I preschool program be coordinated with other preschool programs?**

A school may include appropriate Title I activities as part of another public preschool program. For example, a Title I preschool program could provide, in full or part, the early childhood component of an Even Start project.

- Title I funds could also be used to complement or extend a Head Start program. Title I funds could be used to provide services to Title I eligible children who are not eligible for Head Start services. Title I could also be used to provide additional services to Head Start children who are also eligible for Title I services by extending the daily program for additional time or increasing the number of days, or providing services for Title I eligible students at times Head Start is not operating.

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- Districts that are able to collaborate with a Head Start or other preschool program basically have two options:
  - hire staff to go over and work in a Head Start or locally run preschool program or
  - purchase slots at a Head Start or
  - locally run preschool program. If this option is selected, the district needs to identify a preschool liaison in the school district that is responsible for ensuring compliance with all of the Title I regulations. Regardless of which option is selected, it is critical to remember that when Title I funds are used to support a Head Start or locally run preschool program, it becomes a Title I program and must follow all of the Title I regulations.

Regardless of whether or not services are blended, schools need to make an attempt to collaborate with a local Head Start or locally run preschool program. These programs can be a valuable resource in selecting components of a preschool program which includes outcomes, curriculum, assessment measures, etc., as they have established programs and experience in operating early childhood programs.

### Can Title I funds be used to meet the requirements of Paths to Quality?

There are several requirements for Paths to Quality, many of which are required for public school buildings and would not necessarily be an additional cost. Costs for training, etc may be allowable if other funds are not available. Title I funds used for preschool must be reasonable, allocable, and necessary and must be in compliance with federal fiscal guidance.

### Will our program be eligible for preschool vouchers?

Indiana recently approved funding for a preschool pilot program, to be implemented in five selected counties. Most counties will not participate and several school districts will not be eligible for vouchers.

### Are preschool staff and student enrollment included when determining a school's student-to-instructional staff ratios for comparability purposes?

In our Comparability of Services Guidance there is nothing indicating that PK is included; however, if schools are PK-05 (for example) the LEA includes those students and appropriate staff when reporting. The Non-Regulatory Guidance, August 2003, includes PK in their examples and in the Q & A, page 36, B-18. it states "Generally, preschool should not be considered a grade-span for comparability purposes unless the state considers preschool to be part of elementary and secondary education." If there is only one preschool in the corporation it would stand alone, as there is nothing in which to compare.